

Thomas Jefferson to James Monroe, April 17, 1791, with Copy, from the Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes. Federal Edition. Collected and Edited by Paul Leicester Ford.

TO JAMES MONROE J. MSS.

Philadelphia Apr. 17. 1791.

Dear Sir, —Your favor of Mar. 29. 1791. came to hand last night. I sincerely sympathize with you on the step which your brother has taken without consulting you, and wonder indeed how it could be done, with any attention in the agents, to the laws of the land. I fear he will hardly persevere in the second plan of life adopted for him, as matrimony illy agrees with study, especially in the first stages of both. However you will readily perceive that, *the* thing being done, there is now but one question, that is what is to be done to make the best of it, in respect both to his & your happiness? A step of this kind indicates no vice, nor other foible than of following too hastily the movements of a warm heart. It admits therefore of the continuance of cordial affection, & calls perhaps more indispensably for your care & protection. To conciliate the affection of all parties, and to banish all suspicion of discontent, will conduce most to your own happiness also. I am sorry to hear that your daughter has been unwell, & hope she is recovered ere this, and that Mrs. Monroe enjoys good health. Affairs in France are still going on well. The late pacification between Spain & England has not been a reconciliation. It is thought the fire is but slightly covered, & may burst out should the Northern war spread as is expected. Great Britain is still endeavoring to plunder us of our carry-

-ing business. The parliament have a bill before them to admit wheat brought in *British* bottoms to be warehoused rent free, so that the merchants are already giving a preference

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to British bottoms for that commodity. Should we lose the transportation of our own wheat, it will put down a great proportion of our shipping, already pushed by British vessels out of some of the best branches of business. In order further to circumscribe our carrying, the Commissioners of the Treasury have lately determined to admit no vessel as American, unless built here. This takes from us the right of prescribing by our own laws the conditions of naturalizing vessels in our own country, and in the event of a war in which we should be neutral, prevents our increasing, by purchase, the quantity of our shipping, so as to avail ourselves of the full benefit of the neutrality of our flag. If we are to add to our own stock of shipping only as much as we can build, a war will be over before we shall be the better of it. We hear of continual murders in the Westward. I hope we shall drub the Indians well this summer & then change our plan from war to bribery. We must do as the Spaniards & English do, keep them in peace by liberal & constant presents. They find it the cheapest plan, & so shall we. The expence of this summers expedition would have served for presents for half a century. In this way hostilities being suspended for some length of time, a real affection may succeed on our frontiers to that hatred now exist-

-ing there. Another powerful motive is that in this way we may leave no pretext for raising or continuing an army. Every rag of an Indian depredation will otherwise serve as a ground to raise troops with those who think a standing army and a public debt necessary for the happiness of the U. S. and we shall never be permitted to get rid of either. Our treasury still thinks that these new encroachments of Gr. Brit. on our carrying trade must be met by passive obedience and non-resistance, lest any misunderstanding with them should *affect our credit, or the prices of our public paper*. New schemes are on foot for bringing more paper to market by encouraging great manufacturing companies to form, and their actions, or paper-shares, to be transferrable as bank-stock. We are ruined, Sir, if we do not over rule the principles that 'the more we owe, the more prosperous we shall be,' 'that a public debt furnishes the means of enterprise,' 'that if ours should be once paid off, we should incur another by any means however extravagant' &c. &c.—Colo. Eveleigh died yesterday

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mornng.—Present me affectionately & most affectionately to Mrs. Monroe. I cannot be with you till September. Adieu, my dear Sir.